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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 004124

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#) [UN](#)

SUBJECT: TNA REVERSES DEFINITION OF "VOTER"

REF: BAGHDAD 4109

Classified By: Political Counselor Robert Ford, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (SBU) On October 5, 119 TNA members voted to pass a measure that clarifies the Arabic term "nakhabeen" (i.e., voter) in the TAL to mean "those who cast their vote". 28 members abstained. This decision overturns the October 2 resolution that defined the term to mean "registered voter" in a move criticized by the international community and Sunni Arabs for illegitimately stacking the deck in favor of passing the constitution in the October 15 referendum.

2. (SBU) Deputy Speaker Shahrastani introduced the October 5 measure by saying it was necessary to meet UN international standards and that he expected the ITG and IECI to provide increased security measures in return. Shahrastani cited a UN letter indicating the TNA needed to have one definition of the word "voter" in order to meet international standards of integrity and transparency.

3. (SBU) Shahrastani said he supported the principals of integrity and transparency, but had asked the ITG and IECI to respond to three key concerns in return for approval of the amendment. These concerns (reftel) related to security at specific sites, making adjustments to oversight of polling in certain areas, and credibly addressing any voter complaints raised after the referendum.

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COMMENT  
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4. (C) Shahrastani's public statement signaled a clear sensitivity to the opinion of the UN and the international community. The quick turnaround shows the value of the UN making points publicly while we work behind the scenes. However, the TNA's effort to create a linkage between the definition of "voter" and security needs of Shia and Kurdish voters suggests troubling readiness to exploit the threat from Sunni Arab extremists politically. We will continue to emphasize our readiness to work with the TNA members on their security concerns, while stressing that such concerns must not provide the excuse for departure from international democratic standards.  
Khalilzad